New Roots in New York

Trace why immigrants came, where they settled, and how they adapted.

SS24.US1.17c "Investigate and recount the experiences of immigrant communities in urban America, including patterns of settlement, cultural assimilation, and origins of migration."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline reasons people left home, circle details showing where and why they settled, and write A beside adaptations or K beside customs they kept.

Finding a Place in the City

1 At the turn of the twentieth century, a crowded steamship might carry families from the Russian Empire and southern Italy toward New York City. Many Jewish migrants left the Russian Empire because antisemitic laws restricted their lives, and violence threatened their safety. Some also sought steadier work. Many Italians left southern villages where land was scarce and wages were low. Relatives already in America often sent letters or money for passage. These journeys did not have a single cause: danger, limited opportunity, and family connections shaped different decisions. Once ashore, newcomers still had to choose where to live and earn a living.

2 On Manhattan's Lower East Side, many Jewish newcomers rented rooms in crowded tenements near relatives, synagogues, and garment shops. Some worked long hours sewing clothing, while others opened small businesses. Italian migrants also formed close urban neighborhoods, including parts of Lower Manhattan and East Harlem. Familiar languages, churches, and shops helped neighbors share news and find work. Settlement near people from the same region could ease a difficult arrival, but it did not make city life easy. High rents and cramped housing affected many families, and workers often faced low pay and unsafe conditions. Neighborhoods offered support alongside hardship.

3 Living together did not mean living apart from the wider city. Children from both communities attended public schools and learned English, sometimes faster than their parents. Adults might learn English at work while continuing to speak Yiddish or Italian at home. Jewish families maintained religious practices and community newspapers; Italian families supported churches and celebrated religious festivals. These choices varied from family to family and across generations. Learning a new language or taking a city job did not require giving up every older custom. In New York, immigrants could adapt to American institutions while keeping ties that made their neighborhoods feel familiar.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the reasons for leaving differ between many Jewish migrants from the Russian Empire and many migrants from southern Italy?

2. How could relatives already in America shape both a newcomer's journey and the choice of a neighborhood?

3. Compare where the two communities settled in New York. What made these neighborhoods useful to newcomers?

4. Use one example of adaptation and one example of a custom kept to explain why learning new ways did not mean giving up every older practice.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a first-person diary entry from a fictional immigrant newly living in New York around 1900. Choose one community in the passage; include a historically supported reason for leaving, explain a neighborhood choice, and describe one adaptation and one custom kept. Add one realistic personal detail you invent.

ANSWER KEY

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GRADE 10 · SS24.US1.17c

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline reasons people left home, circle details showing where and why they settled, and write A beside adaptations or K beside customs they kept. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the reasons for leaving differ between many Jewish migrants from the Russian Empire and many migrants from southern Italy?	**Many Jewish migrants faced antisemitic restrictions and violence, while many southern Italians faced scarce land and low wages. Some Jewish migrants also sought steadier work.**
2	How could relatives already in America shape both a newcomer's journey and the choice of a neighborhood?	**Relatives could send letters or money for passage. Newcomers could then settle near relatives who offered support in the city.**
3	Compare where the two communities settled in New York. What made these neighborhoods useful to newcomers?	**Many Jewish newcomers settled on the Lower East Side, while Italian migrants formed neighborhoods in parts of Lower Manhattan and East Harlem. Relatives, familiar languages, places of worship, and shops helped people share news and find work.**
4	Use one example of adaptation and one example of a custom kept to explain why learning new ways did not mean giving up every older practice.	**For example, children learned English in public schools while their families continued to speak Yiddish or Italian at home.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I left a village in southern Italy after my father could no longer earn enough from our small plot of land. My cousin sent money for my passage, so I found a room near him in East Harlem. He introduced me to neighbors who could help me look for work. I practice English phrases before visiting a shop, but at home we still speak Italian. On Sunday, I walk with my cousin to church. The room is crowded, yet hearing familiar voices makes this new city less strange.

Accept other passage-supported examples of migration, settlement, adaptation, and cultural continuity. In the diary entry, invented personal details should be plausible for the time and should not contradict the passage.